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ABSTRACT

This guide for school district administrators answers question about Even Start, a new, special family-centered compensatory education program funded under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 that combines adult literacy, parent education, and early childhood education. The following issues about program design are addressed: (1) components: parents as teachers, parents as learners, and children as learners; (2) physical setting and operation; (3) center- and home-based programs; (4) collaboration requirements; (5) collaboration techniques; (6) use of existing support services; (7) balancing needs of adults and children; (8) program operation; (9) minimum amount of time that participants should be enrolled; and (10) teaching basic skills to adults. The following issues about eligibility are addressed: (1) primary clientele; (2) client needs; (3) high school graduate participation; (4) current enrollment in an adult education program; (5) criteria for children; (6) targeted children; (7) children of parents who need English as a Second Language or special education services; (8) mandatory exit criteria; and (9) interrelationship of parent and child participation. The following information about selection and evaluation is provided: (1) steps in selection; (2) recruitment; and (3) program evaluation. A list of regional technical assistance centers and a copy of program application evaluation criteria are appended. (FMW)

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EVEN START QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Even Start is a new and special family-centered program that combines adult literacy, parent education, and early childhood education.

Because the program concept is new, LEAs preparing an Even Start application may be confused about how to begin.

In an attempt to assist the LEAs in this endeavor, the Parents in Education Center (funded through the Chapter 1 Parent Involvement Specialty Option) has prepared a list of questions and answers.

As you read through this document, keep in mind that the intention was to respond to common questions about the Even Start regulations in a brief and concise manner. If the information you seek is not within these pages or if you need additional assistance, contact the Compensatory Education Programs office at the U.S. Department of Education. Call Tom Fagan at (202) 732-4682.

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PARENTS —IN— EDUCATION

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PROGRAM DESIGN

1. **Must an Even Start program include all three components (parents as teachers, parents as learners, children as learners) or may Even Start funds be used to provide the linkage between existing community resources or support only one or two of the three components?**

   Families enrolled must be served by all three components. However, Even Start funds might be used to link services provided by agencies other than the grantee rather than funding all three components directly. For example, Even Start funds might be used to provide training in parenting to a group of eligible participants who are already receiving literacy services through adult education and supplement that training with home-based instruction for parent and child. The goals of Even Start are to be accomplished through a combination of adult literacy, parent education, and early childhood education but each funded program need not be the sole supplier of all services.

2. **In order to integrate early childhood and adult education programs, must Even Start programs locate both components physically in the same setting and operate them simultaneously, or may programs have concurrent enrollments but separate settings?**

   Program configurations can be flexible to allow LEAs to provide services to individual clients in a manner that is consistent with clients' needs and community resources. For example, some LEAs may elect to fund a total home-based approach while others may choose a combination home and center-based approach. However, all Even Start projects must have two basic characteristics. First, they must be family centered. This means that they must focus on parents and children as a unit. Services should take place in the home when possible and be designed so that parents and children can work on activities together. Second, the aim of the program must be to help the parents become active in their own children's development. Projects should not merely teach parents in one setting and children in another. The primary goal of Even Start is to help parents be their children's first teacher and become more literate in the process, rather than teach the parents and children in separate and distinct programs.

3. **Does a family-centered program permit activities that are center-based? What about home-based programs for all three components?**

   While programs should take place in the home if possible, there are advantages to both home-based and center-based approaches. While home-based programs provide greater opportunity for individual attention to the family and opportunities for the service provider to develop a trusting relationship with the family in a more relaxed, informal way than do center-based approaches, the social and cognitive stimulation of center-based programs, coupled with the social support available in such a context, contribute distinct advantages not available in home-based programs. Many parents may not have the confidence to participate in group activities and to interact with staff in formal educational settings. For these clients, a developmental approach beginning with individualized home-based intervention followed by participation in more

formal center-based programs might be appropriate. Matching appropriate intervention to clients necessitates a degree of flexibility in the types of programs offered and the way in which they are coordinated.

4. Why are LEAs required to collaborate with other agencies?

It is the purpose of Even Start to successfully combine adult education for parents and quality educational experiences for children into a single program. In some cases, the work of Even Start will be to create an environment in which motivation for literacy will be enhanced through effective parenting. In many cases there may already be existing programs and other community resources for these purposes. Rather than supersede or compete, Even Start funds are intended to build on these resources in order to create a complete program. Given the limited size of the Even Start authorization and the large number of existing local, state, and federal programs focused on literacy and early childhood education, it is critical that applicants use Even Start funds as the extra piece needed to fashion an Even Start program out of these various sources of support.

5. How might LEAs collaborate with other agencies?

Even Start projects are cooperative projects that should build on existing community resources in two ways:

a. Applicants are required to collaborate in preparing the proposed project application with, where appropriate, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, the state education agency, and other appropriate nonprofit organizations.

   This collaboration will help ensure, among other aspects of project planning, practical and effective ways to identify and recruit eligible applicants; identification of relevant programs with which the project should coordinate; and identification of research and other information needed to design quality proposals. Special training and other services essential to successful projects may be provided by other organizations.

b. Grantees are required to coordinate with other programs serving similar populations, specifically, programs funded under Chapter 1, relevant programs under Chapter 2, the Adult Education Act, the Education for the Handicapped Act, the Job Training Partnership Act, and with Head Start, volunteer literacy, and other relevant programs.

   Even Start is expected to utilize the services of these programs for the benefit of Even Start participants. Even Start cannot use its funds to replace services available in the community. These services provided under the Adult Education Act, the Education for the Handicapped Act, the Job Training Partnership Act, Head Start, Volunteer Literacy, and other relevant programs may be counted toward the matching fund requirement. However, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 funds cannot be used toward meeting the matching fund requirement.

6. Would it be appropriate for Even Start programs to provide in-house support services (i.e., counseling, nutrition information)?

Section 1054(b) (3) allows the use of Even Start funds for support services to enable families to participate in the program. It should be stressed, however, that Even Start funds should only be used for support services as a last resort. Communities should attempt to utilize other resources (including other federal programs) for noninstructional costs in order to maximize the level of educational services provided to parents and children.

7. How can the need for flexibility of entrance/exit opportunities for adult learners be balanced with the need for consistent child participation?

To be eligible for Even Start, a child must have a parent who is eligible for adult education services. A parent must be a participant in Even Start if the child is to be served, since the keystone to Even Start is family-based instruction.

Programs are urged to develop exit or transition guidelines as part of the local program design. Guidelines will vary depending upon program design and the population served. It is important for programs to be sensitive in the referral and/or placement of children and adults into appropriate programs when families are no longer eligible for Even Start. Successful transition from Even Start is the foundation of success in other educational programs. Collaboration with other agencies is critical for providing such transition services.

8. Is it expected that Even Start will operate on a continuous cycle?

Even Start is not a school-based formal educational program dependent upon an academic calendar. It is expected that many agencies involved in collaborative relationships with Even Start programs are year-round programs and it makes sense to work with collaborating agencies to ensure continuous services to Even Start families.

9. Do Even Start regulations specify a minimum amount of time that participants should be enrolled in the program?

A local project may choose to define the length of time parents and children are expected to be served by Even Start. This may be determined by the model of family-centered service that is implemented and by research findings.

10. Is the purpose of the adult literacy component to teach basic skills?

Yes. The purpose is to improve basic skill levels of parents in order to enable them to serve as their child's first teacher and to improve their own educational level. The work of Even Start may be to create an environment in which the focus is motivation for literacy rather than formal literacy instruction. More formalized adult education programs may be better provided through other existing agencies.

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

1. Who is the primary client of an Even Start program, parent or child?

Parents and children are both primary clients. "It is the purpose of Even Start to improve the educational opportunities of the Nation's children and adults by integrating early childhood and adult education for parents into a unified program...." (Section 1051)

2. Whose needs determine eligibility in the program - parent's or child's?

Eligibility for Even Start is clearly described in the statute and regulations: parents who are eligible for service under the Adult Education Act, and their children who reside in Chapter 1 eligible attendance areas. From the pool of eligible families, grantees will select those families most in need.

According to the definition under the Adult Education Act: "adult education" means services or instruction below the college level for adults --

a. who are not enrolled in secondary school;

b. who lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable them to function effectively in society or who do not have a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education and who have not achieved an equivalent level of education;

c. who are not currently required to be enrolled in school; and

d. whose lack of mastery of basic skills results in an inability to speak, read, or write the English language which constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment commensurate with their real ability, and thus are in need of programs to help eliminate such inability and raise the level of education of such individuals with a view to making them less likely to become dependent on others.

3. Can a parent with a high school diploma be eligible for Even Start?

Adults with high school diplomas are not excluded from participating in Even Start programs if they lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable them to function effectively in society and meet the other criteria as stated above (under 2) as defined by the Adult Education Act.

4. Does enrollment in an adult education program make an adult ineligible for Even Start?

No. Enrollment in an adult education program may be considered a supplemental service to Even Start and, in most cases, part of the collaborative nature of Even Start.

5. Must children meet any criteria other than residence in an eligible Chapter 1 attendance area?

Children must reside in a Chapter 1 participating elementary attendance area, be between the ages of 1-7, and have one or two parents who are eligible for services under the Adult Education Act and are participating in the Even Start project.

6. Should all age appropriate children of eligible parents be enrolled in Even Start or may Even Start programs target children within a family?

Local program design determines whether all or some of the age-eligible children of Even Start parents receive direct services.

7. May children or adults who are identified as needing ESL or special education services receive service through Even Start?

Yes. LEAs should, as part of their collaborative effort, build upon services being otherwise provided to these participants.

8. Are there mandatory exit criteria for Even Start programs?

Yes. Families are no longer eligible for Even Start services if:

a) there are no children between the ages of 1-7 who reside in a participating Chapter 1 attendance area;

b) children have parents no longer participating or parents have children no longer participating in the project; or

c) the parent is no longer eligible for services under the Adult Education Act.

In addition to these criteria LEAs may wish to establish local exit criteria in keeping with the goals and objectives of their program.

9. If the parent exits the program must the child leave the program?

Yes. Since Even Start is a parent-child centered program, both must be enrolled for either to receive services. However, projects should be sensitive to this issue and its possible impact on program participants and give careful consideration to transition and referral plans when designing an Even Start project.

SELECTION/EVALUATION

1. What are the steps involved in selecting Even Start program participants?

An LEA should select participants in a fair and objective manner. The following five steps may be used as guidelines:

a) define eligibility criteria clearly, beginning with eligibility criteria from the Even Start regulations and adding criteria appropriate to the design of the local program

b) disseminate information about the program and eligibility criteria to the public and appropriate cooperating agencies

c) recruit participants actively and collect necessary individual information to complete individual profiles on criteria

d) screen available information to define eligible pool

e) select participants most in need from eligible pool using defined process (e.g., rank-ordering, weighting, additional criteria, etc.)

2. Where might one begin to recruit potentially eligible participants?

The following agencies are good starting places for information:

- local State Office of Employment Security
- local State Welfare Office
- state or local Divisions of Adult Education
- JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act) programs
- Community Action Program
- Head Start Program
- local mental health agency
- local Section 8 public housing authority
- state or local office supervising citizen activity (check at your city hall or county courthouse)
- area day care providers
- Well Child Clinic or Women; Infants and Children (WIC) program

3. What is expected for program evaluation?

The Even Start grantees are required to show progress toward meeting project objectives for purposes of continuation funding; in addition, grantees are responsible for evaluation as specified under Section 75.590 of the Education Department's General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR). Since the Secretary is responsible for the programs evaluation as required under Section 1058 of the statute, it is intended that the grantees and the Secretary will coordinate their evaluation designs and data collection to minimize duplication of effort. The Secretary's independent evaluator will be working with the project evaluators.

Even Start is expected to provide models for replication; this effort will also be coordinated with the Secretary's evaluator.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. What staffing qualifications apply?

Staff roles should be defined in the application for Even Start, adhering to district and state standards applicable to personnel working in educational agencies.

2. What is meant in the regulations by special training?

Because the goals of Even Start are to be accomplished through a combination of adult literacy, parent education, and early childhood education, it is important that programs provide adequate training opportunities for staff in each of these areas. The most effective staff members are those who are skilled at working collaboratively with parents to bridge the child's home and early learning environments. For reasons of age or program capacity, some young children ages 1-7 may be in child care while their parents and siblings directly participate in Even Start programs. Extending access to special Even Start training to supportive child care staff on a space-available basis will allow eligible children in participating families to have the benefits of a quality early learning experience.

3. What records of matching funds are appropriate?

Annual records should be maintained indicating the dollar amount of funds provided by other sources. If in-kind contributions are used, record the dollar value of donated services and goods to be used to support the program.

If an LEA desires, all matching funds can be in-kind.

4. How can the LEAs use TACs for assistance with Even Start programs?

If specified in the state's letter of agreement TACs may provide assistance to local programs in the following areas:

- identify existing model programs
- assessment instruments
- research in early childhood and adult literacy

TACs may not write or assist in the writing of the LEA Even Start application or actually conduct a local evaluation.

Technical Assistance Centers

RMC Research Corporation, Hampton, NH **Region A: CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, PR, RI, VT**	800-258-0802
Advanced Technology, Indianapolis, IN **Region B: DE, DC, IN, KY, MD, MI, OH, PA, WV**	800-456-2380
Educational Testing Service, Atlanta, GA **Region C: AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA**	404-524-4501
Research & Training Associates, Overland Park, KS **Region D: IL, IA, MN, MO, ND, NE, SD, WI**	913-451-8117
RMC Research Corporation, Denver, CO **Region E: AR, AZ, CO, LA, KS, NM, OK, TX, UT**	800-922-3636
RMC Research Corporation, Mountain View, CA **Region F: AK, CA, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, WA, WY**	800-451-4407

Even Start Program
CFDA Number 84.213

Applicant _____ State _____ PR# _____ Urban _____ Rural _____

Panel Code # _____ Panelist's Code # _____

Application Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Agree	Disagree
Applicant has demonstrated ability to provide additional funding		
Applicant proposes a cooperative project that builds on existing community resources to create a new range of services integrating early childhood education and adult education for parents into a unified program.		

Criteria	Maximum Score	Project Score
Likelihood of success in meeting the Even Start goals	35	
Percentage of eligible children and parents to be served	10	
Degree of cooperation and coordination	30	
Reasonableness of budget	10	
Promise as a model	15	
Total	100	

Summary Comments

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Print Name of Reviewer _____ Signature of Reviewer _____ Date _____

Application Evaluation Criteria

Likelihood of Success in Meeting the Even Start Goals

The Secretary reviews each application to determine the extent to which the proposed project will provide a family-centered education program that includes activities to promote literacy of participating parents, train parents to support the educational growth of their children, and prepare children for success in regular school programs. In applying this criterion the Secretary determines the extent to which the project described in the application--

(1) Contains clear, attainable, measurable objectives against which the progress and success of the project will be measured (5 points); _____

(2) Includes appropriate activities, services, and timelines to achieve those objectives (5 points); _____

(3) Designates responsibilities to specific personnel who are qualified to administer and implement the project and to provide special training necessary to prepare staff for the program (5 points); _____

(4) Includes an effective plan to ensure proper and efficient administration of the project (5 points); _____

(5) Is based on sound research in the areas of early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education (5 points); _____

(6) Contains instructional and developmental activities appropriate to the level of the participants to be served (5 points); and _____

(7) Provides for continuity of services to maintain progress by, for example, providing continuous services through the summer months (5 points). _____

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

	Maximum Score	Assigned Score
	35	

Likelihood of Success in Meeting the Even Start Goals (Cont.)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Percentage of Eligible Children and Parents to be Served

The Secretary reviews each application to determine the total percentage of unserved eligible children and parents that will be served under the proposed project. This percentage is determined by dividing the number of parents and children to be served by the project by the total number of eligible parents and children who are not currently receiving these or similar family-center services. The Secretary awards points on the basis of that percentage, as follows:

over 80%	10 points
70-79%	8 points
60-69%	6 points
50-59%	5 points
40-49%	4 points
30-39%	3 points
20-29%	2 points
1-19%	1 point

"Similar family-centered services" means services (1) that focus on the parents and children as a unit; (2) are designed so that parents and children can work on activities together, with services provided in the home when possible, and (3) are designed to help parents become full partners in the education of their children, to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners, and to ensure that parents are provided with literacy training.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Maximum Score	Assigned Score
10	

Degree of Cooperation and Coordination

The Secretary reviews each application to determine the extent to which cooperation and coordination will take place in all phases of the proposed project among a variety of relevant service providers, including those funded under programs listed in section 1054(b)(7) of the Act, 20 U.S.C. 2744(b)(7). The Secretary considers the extent to which--

(1) The applicant has made a survey of all relevant providers and is fully aware of similar and related services, including State and locally funded programs being provided to eligible children and adults (5 points): _____

(2) The applicant has, in planning the project, engaged various providers in discussions that have resulted in firm agreements for specific cooperative activities (10 points): _____

(3) The plan of operation includes specific provision for additional cooperative efforts with other service providers, including State and locally funded providers, throughout the duration of the project (5 points); and _____

(4) Services offered by the applicant will build upon but not duplicate, those being provided to project participants by the applicant or other service providers (10 points). _____

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Maximum Score	Assigned Score
30	

Degree of Cooperation and Coordination (Cont.)

Strengths

Weaknesses

Reasonableness of Budget

The Secretary reviews each application to determine the extent to which the budget submitted for the entire cost of the project appears reasonable, given the scope of the proposed project. The Secretary considers the extent to which—

(1) Costs are reasonable in relation to expected outcomes;

(2) The applicant will make use of currently available resources such as facilities and equipment; and

(3) The budget provides sufficient information to support the requested amount of funds.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

	Maximum Score	Assigned Score
	10	

Promise as a Model

The Secretary reviews each application to determine the extent to which the proposed project shows promise in providing a model that may be transferred to other local educational agencies (LEAs). The Secretary considers the extent to which--

(1) The preliminary evaluation plan described in the application (a) measures the progress and success of the project in achieving its clearly stated and attainable goals; (b) utilizes concrete and quantifiable means of measurement; and (c) includes, if possible, comparisons with appropriate control groups (8 points); _____

(2) The general components of the project are readily understandable and useable by other entities, and are based on research or models that have proven to be adaptable to various circumstances (5 points); and _____

(3) The applicant shows a willingness to serve as a model and to disseminate detailed information about the project to the Department and to other LEAs (2 points). _____

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

	Maximum Score	Assigned Score
	15	